



CMSCELEBRATES

# Connection

Women's  
HISTORY MONTH

March 2021

## Director's Monthly Message: Janel L. Forde



Every year, the arrival of March weather brings us notable evidence of hope for renewal and growth as the ground warms and nature begins to awaken all around us, defying the freezing temperatures and blanketing snow that may have dominated our lives in recent weeks.

**March is more than just the month in which Spring begins.** March is the month when we gratefully remember renowned **women in our history who have made life better for us all** – those who have striven continuously, often at great personal cost, for fairness and equity, and those who have used the equity thus secured to accomplish great things in government, in business, in science, in the arts, and to contribute caringly to the quality of life for all.

And this particular year, after so much sadness, isolation, and, for too many, fear and despair, from the threat of a virus – this year, peering through the mist, we see perhaps a glimmer of hope still in the distance as the numbers of people taking ill from the virus appear to be diminishing even as the hope of effective vaccines with widespread availability brightens even more.

For now, however, **we must continue to be safe** in our activities during this most critical moment of the fight against COVID-19. We are making headway and things are improving, but we must not forget that the virus still can regain the upper hand if we lose focus and fail to properly social distance, stay home if we can, wash hands frequently, take the vaccine when available, and always wear our masks when encountering others.

Now is, perhaps, the most critical time in the period – the moment when we might feel comfortable letting down our guard as success seems imminent. We must not let down now. We must see our strategy of safety all the way through, and now more than ever, we must double down on protecting ourselves and others – even those of us who have received early vaccinations. There is still much we do not know about the virus, how it changes, how vaccines will work against variants, how vaccines affect transmission, and precisely how the virus is contracted and passed along.

As has been the rule for the year since last March, we must take nothing for granted, and we must employ every reasonable precaution.

For the many who have suffered with the health effects of anxiety, depression, and related behavioral health threats, **I want to remind CMS staff that our statewide Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available if needed to help us through these difficult moments.** All non-AFSCME CMS staff members and other State employees can utilize EAP to access confidential behavioral health services and information through Magellan at any time day or night. AFSCME-31 members have assistance available through the collective bargaining unit's Personal Support Program (PSP). I urge you to consider these helpful programs for support and treatment that you or your families may need.

**All employees can access free, confidential behavioral health services through the Personal Support Program (PSP) and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** through these contact numbers:

- PSP for AFSCME31 members:  
(800) 647-8776, Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM- 4:30 PM
- EAP through Magellan for non-AFSCME31 members:  
(866) 659-3848, 24/7

March brings us hope in many things, along with warmer breezes, soft rains, bright sunshine intermingled with blustery days, and always, the earliest flowers of Spring. **March brings us confidence of even warmer, brighter days to come**, the fragrance of freshly turned earth, and of cleansing rains to wash away the last remnants of Winter.

Let us all resolve this March to renew ourselves, give thanks for our many blessings, and take heart as we find our ways away from the threat of disease and as we rediscover our hearts for community, sharing, and togetherness. **We are surviving these times the only way we know how, united and brave in the face of any threat.**

**I am continually proud and amazed by the work our dedicated CMS staff does every day, despite the many challenges we face.**

You keep showing that you have the creativity to find ways to be the best at any time of any year! And for that, I am very, very grateful. Be safe out there!



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## Employee of the Month – Labor Maintenance Lead Worker Jeffrey Parks



A longtime CMS staff member, Labor Maintenance Lead Worker **Jeffrey Parks**, has been named the CMS Employee of the Month for March 2021. Parks, of the **Bureau of Property Management**, works from the Harry Hanley Building, the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Springfield headquarters.

**"Our team leaders are the root to staff success, and**

**Jeff is one of those outstanding team leaders,"** said Ray Coleman, Facility Manager, and Parks' immediate supervisor. Coleman submitted the award nomination for Parks **"due to the constant acknowledgements I receive from other CMS employees who have opportunities to observe and work with Jeff on various projects."**

Those acknowledgements weave a consistent story of readiness, ability, cooperation, and a willingness to go the extra mile that have earned Parks the respect of peers throughout CMS and its client agencies. **"Jeff needs some accolades – he's a superstar,"** said Facility Manager **Ryan Marucco**, who himself earned the Employee of the Month Award in December 2020.

Marucco and Parks have worked together at times relocating and refurbishing various office arrangements during the COVID response since March 2020. **"Every time I ask for Jeff's help, it's not, 'Why?' but 'When?' He makes us look good at CMS, and I think he knows more than any of us,"** Marucco said. "On the rare occasion Jeff doesn't know the answer to something, he finds someone who does... When we deal with Jeff, we are dealing with a true professional that really has a firm grasp of the job."

Facility Manager **Mark Clayton** agrees: **"Jeff is a doer with a can-do attitude. Jeff takes pride in his work and follows through until the project is complete."**

Parks himself credits the people around him, and his team members specifically, for their successes. **"I am humbled by this honor, but it's not just me, it's this really talented and dedicated staff all around us that makes CMS what we are,"** Parks said. "We do the little jobs that nobody really thinks about, and aren't much to talk about, but if they don't get done, things can really get messed up," including basic coordination and handling of office moves, equipment arrangements, and the remodeling work involved with office moves.

Besides equipment inventories and basic customer service, Parks and his teams are responsible for facilities work in a variety of areas ranging from **keeping sidewalks and drives maintained at the Executive Mansion, to snow removal and parking area maintenance at a variety of State agencies and facilities.** He praises the cooperation and teamwork between CMS and IDOT for seamlessly keeping parking areas clear and ready for workers following weather events.

His headaches include daily logistics challenges. "We don't have all the vehicles we need, so it is a challenge making sure people have the vehicles and equipment they need for these jobs every day," Parks said. "The planning is really important, and it may be the toughest part of the job."

**"I think it's all about the teamwork, and CMS, especially recently, has really been about empowering teams and letting people do their jobs,"** said Parks, who joined CMS as a maintenance worker in 2006. Parks credits Statewide Facilities Manager **James Fox** for his successful team-building strategies since joining the staff in 2019. "That didn't happen a lot before," said Parks, who credits his own supervisor, Coleman, with embodying the same team spirit. "James is a great leader, really pointing the way, and Ray doesn't micromanage anything – he shows great leadership and just lets me do my job," Parks added. **"It's a great environment to work in."**

His coworkers point consistently to Parks' leadership as a key to his success, especially in communications. **"Jeff's communication is impeccable,"** Marucco said. "He never leaves anyone hanging. He returns calls promptly and it makes it so much easier for the rest of us to keep things moving as needed."

"Jeff's communication at all levels of CMS management and staff are exceptional," said Stationery Engineer **Brian Saxer**, who supervises a team that earned the CMS Employee Team of the Month Award for innovative fuel station repairs for IDOT in November 2019. "I work with Jeff daily and enjoy watching him accomplish goals, solve problems, and educate his staff."

"Jeff is an integral part of BoPM, and therefore, all of CMS," said **Stephanie Chalcraft**, CMS Internal Property Control Officer. "The historic knowledge he possesses is unparalleled and has been of great help to me during this transition. **Jeff is the type of person who brings solutions to the table instead of problems...** His positive attitude, knowledge and ability to lead by example makes working with him a great experience."

Facility Manager Clayton said it this way: **"When I get notice that Jeff is heading up a project or taking care of an issue, I take comfort in the fact that I know this job will get done and get done right. He is truly an exemplary employee."**

## Safety Corner - Wipe or Wipe Out

One of the more common incidents during winter weather is a loss of footing that causes an individual to lose balance and end up on the floor or pavement, commonly known as a **slip/fall event**. One of the most common root causes of these incidents is a **wet, oily, or icy walking surface**. Please use the following tips to prevent slips and falls inside the workplace and as you travel in inclement weather.

### Spill Cleanup

Most employees either handle a variety of fluid products or work in an area where these fluids are used. These fluids include cleaning products, lubricants, coolants, water treatment chemicals, or simply water. Despite our best efforts, these products can end up on the floor.

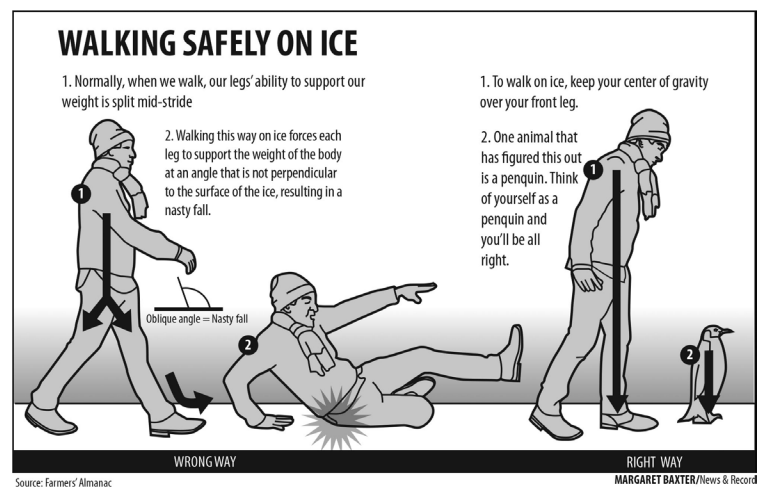
Other times we may encounter liquids like snow, slush, and water that are tracked through any of the facilities we work inside of and manage.

**Any liquid on a walking surface presents a slip/ fall hazard – not just to ourselves but to others as well.** It is important to communicate these hazards and be aware of signage or the need for signage.

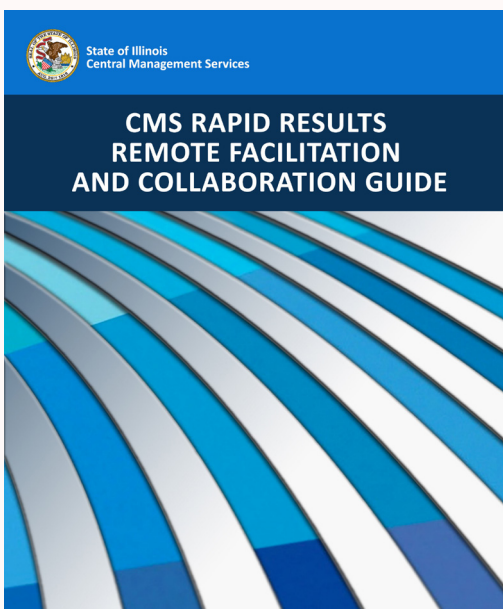
Further investigation reveals the common misperception is that spill cleanup is “someone else’s job.” Not only is this perception incorrect, it doesn’t solve the problem: it doesn’t remove the hazard that could potentially cause lasting harm to us or our co-workers. Spill cleanup is one of the simplest and easiest actions each of us can take to reduce slip/fall hazards in workplace. **If you make a mess, clean it up; if you see a spill, wipe it up.**

### Walking Safely on Ice

- **Walk like a penguin.** The waddle keeps your center of gravity over your front leg and will help keep you upright. Spread your feet out slightly, to increase your center of gravity, and take small steps.
- **Keep your hands out of your pockets while walking** – that decreases your center of gravity and balance, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You need your arms for balance.
- **Wear shoes and boots with good traction.**
- **Walk at a slower pace.**
- **Stay on designated walkways.**
- **Use the handrail** when using stairs and entering and exiting buildings.
- **Use special care when exiting and entering vehicles.** Use the vehicle for support.



## Remote Facilitation and Collaboration Guide



The **CMS Bureau of Operational Excellence (Rapid Results)** has developed CMS' first guide to the best practices of facilitating and collaborating safely, while working remotely during the COVID-19 crisis through **virtual meetings, including training and seminar presentations**. The **Remote Facilitation and Collaboration Guide** comes in response to Statewide stay-at-home orders related to COVID-19, but these best practice guidelines may be used for training, meetings, or events at any time or for any reason that can approximate or even exceed results from standard, in-person training or meetings. These remote facilitation and collaboration guidelines have been researched from **best practices across the country** and have been improved upon in practice as more and more meetings have been needed and conducted from a remote setting.

Remote meetings, collaborations, and training are indeed a part of the “new normal” we all seek in the months ahead, and we are glad to be able to provide needed information to help organizers safely and effectively coordinate groups, relate needed information, train workers in a variety of needs, and follow up in a comprehensive and consistent manner to achieve the work-related results Illinois State agencies must produce.

[Click here to view the full guide.](#)



# Black History Month Recap



Throughout **Black History Month**, CMS facilitated several conversations about equity and inclusion in health, access to justice, and business, including the announcement of two important steps towards economic inclusion for businesses owned by minorities, women and people living with disabilities. CMS convened experts from State agencies and external organization and built new partnerships with companies like Facebook to provide a range of resources and expertise to employees and the public. On social media, we also celebrated and highlighted the achievements of Black men and women in government and introduced our African American Employment Plan Council members.

## Press Announcements

### [The State of Illinois Announces New Methodology to Increase Diversity in Contracting](#)

The Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Announces New Disparity Study to Assess Economic Inclusion in State Contracting Opportunities.

## Event Recaps and Recordings

### **Equity and Inclusion through Intentional Goal Setting** **February 10, 2021**

During this session, CMS announced the State of Illinois' new goal setting methodology developed to increase opportunities for BEP certified businesses. This is the first time the formula has been changed, since the program's inception in 1984. This change will increase the diversity goal percentage by using a smaller pool of vendors leading to an increase in contract spending with businesses owned by minorities, women and people living with disabilities.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording.

### **Capacity Building Strategies for Black Owned Businesses** **February 17, 2021**

During this session, speakers shared capacity building resources for businesses, information on opportunities associated with their organizations and gave insights for strategies for growth for the Illinois business community.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording.

### **Exploring Disparities in Black Heart Health** **February 22, 2021**

In this session, CMS, Be Well Illinois and State of Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton hosted a special presentation exploring disparities in heart health in the Black community in recognition of Black History Month and Heart Health Awareness Month.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording.

### **Fair Access to Justice: Diversity in Procurement - Two Part Series** **February 11, 2021 and February 25, 2021**

**Part I** - In this session, speakers discussed procurement opportunities for businesses owned by minorities, women and people living with disabilities shared information on the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) certification process.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording.

**Part II** - The second session of this series highlighted the important work community organizations are doing to provide information and resources to small business owners statewide. The conversation also focused on how the State can continue to advance economic development in Black communities around Illinois by working alongside community organizations dedicated to this advancement.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording.

### **Black Women in Business** **February 23, 2021**

This session featured a conversation about Black women in business and highlighted two business owners to hear their stories of resilience.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording.

### **Creating the Next Generation of Black Business Owners** **February 26, 2021**

This session featured a conversation about economic empowerment, generational wealth, and the future for children in the Black community. The event featured leaders in the community who are intentionally working to develop the next generation of Black leader, founders and entrepreneurs.

[Click here](#) to view the event recording. (Passcode: d6U&\*yH7)

## Benefit Corner - March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



### COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

#### What is Colorectal Cancer?

According to the American Cancer Society, **most colorectal cancers start as a growth on the inner lining of the colon or rectum.** These growths are called polyps. Some types of polyps can change into cancer over time (usually many years), but not all polyps become cancer. The chance of a polyp turning into cancer depends on the type of polyp

it is. **Colon cancer often has no symptoms.** However, rectal bleeding can be a warning sign and should never be ignored. Notify your physician so that a detailed medical history, X-ray and possibly endoscopic evaluation may be done to make a diagnosis.

#### Risk Factors

1. Being overweight or obese
2. Not being physically active
3. Certain types of diets
  - Diet high in red meats
  - Cooking meats at a high temperature, like frying, broiling, or grilling
4. Smoking
5. Alcohol use

Visit [www.illinois.gov/BeWell](http://www.illinois.gov/BeWell) for more information on risk factors and prevention.

## Wellness Webinars

#### Financial Planning in Uncertain Times Previously Recorded

Join this webinar to:

- Manage volatility.
- Create an emergency plan.
- Learn to take advantage of taxes.
- Create an exit strategy that outlives you.

[Click Here](#) to view the recording.

#### Improving Your Personal and Work Life with Better Sleep Previously Recorded

Join this webinar for:

- The importance of sleep.
- Things that interfere with sleep.
- Techniques to improve your sleep.
- Tips for shift workers.

[Click Here](#) to view the recording.

#### Leadership Series: Leading Powerfully during Change and Uncertainty Wednesday, March 24, 2021 from 1:00 - 2:00 PM CT

Join this webinar to:

- Understand essential differences between change and transition.
- Identify the most important aspects of leadership during trying/ changing times.
- Explore strategies for motivating and engaging employees through times of uncertainty.
- Commit to your own practice of stress management and self-care while managing the challenges of leading others.

Location: [Click Here to Register](#)

#### Wellness Podcast

Hally® Healthcast, discusses 5 key things to know about colorectal cancer and prevention. The guest speaker is **Robert Good, DO, MACOI**, physician and associate chief medical officer for population health at Carle in Urbana. Please find the audio file for the March Healthcast [here](#).



State of Illinois  
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